



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo Bill Would Create Disaster Fund

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 2, 2013

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UTICA – State legislators who represent the Mohawk Valley and Niagara County have followed through on a promise made to flood victims by introducing legislation that would create a state disaster recovery fund.

“When disaster strikes, New Yorkers need financial assistance right away. Too many times, however, they’re caught in a bureaucratic standstill as state officials scramble to find usable funds,” said Sen. Joseph A. Griffo, the bill’s lead sponsor. “Creating this fund will allow us to help people, businesses and municipalities rebuild quickly.”

The bill (S.5987) is co-sponsored by Senators Hugh T. Farley, R- Schenectady; George D. Maziarz, R-Newfane; James L. Seward, R-Oneonta; and David J. Valesky, D-Oneida.

It would create a supplemental fund to provide individual assistance, public assistance and hazard mitigation after a natural or man-made disaster. Aid would be available for a variety of disaster-related expenses, including home repairs and medical expenses for individuals. Municipalities would be eligible to receive funds for such items as public services expenses and debris removal. Infrastructure grants would be available to public schools.

Upon a disaster being declared, the bill would also require the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services to establish a field office at the disaster site and provide relief workers. The agency would also create a disaster recovery center and a toll-free phone number to help those affected apply for assistance.

In all instances, grant applicants would receive funds within one month. Loan applicants would receive aid within two months. To ensure the maximum number of people are helped, aid and loans would not be offered to anyone provided money by their insurance company or the federal government.

This bill is the centerpiece of a six-point legislative plan championed by state senators in response to massive flooding last June. The Mohawk Valley and Niagara County sustained an estimated \$87 million in flood damage between June 26 and July 3, the height of the storm and its devastating aftermath.

Senator Farley said: "I am pleased to join my Senate colleagues in sponsoring this important bill. I have always been impressed by the way that individuals and organizations quickly pull together and work hard to recover from natural disasters, but they need assistance from the government as well. This bill will ensure that New York State is ready and able to provide

the financial assistance that is so crucial to help these communities recover.”

Senator George Maziarz said: “Following the storms that plagued Western New York earlier this summer, my office was inundated with calls for help. It would have been ideal to connect these constituents with FEMA and other agencies, but sometimes that help isn’t available. The enactment of this law would create a much needed safety net for people who need recovery assistance but currently can’t get it.”

Senator James Seward said: “In the aftermath of a disaster, people are forced to make quick decisions that will shape the course of their lives. By having funding at the ready, we can help eliminate financial concerns and facilitate the healing process for needy communities. This is an important part of our six-point legislative plan we unveiled in July, and, along with the other bills, will help rewrite New York’s disaster response playbook.”

Senator David Valesky said: "We have seen too many instances of flood victims lacking basic necessities months after a disaster hits because they are waiting for government to act. That is unacceptable, and I am pleased to co-sponsor this legislation that will ensure expeditious distribution of aid and resources through a disaster recovery fund."